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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the attention given to gender issues in 17 psychology textbooks published between 1985 and 1987 and used in college undergraduate introductory courses. The methodology used was the analysis of content and research citations. Specific issues that were examined included: (1) the explanation of the distinction between gender and sex differences; (2) the inclusion of sections in chapters on gender/sex roles; (3) the presentation of historical and contemporary masculine and feminine perspectives; (4) the coverage of recent research topics relating to androgyny and gender schema theory; and (5) the number and recency of research citations. The results show only four textbooks clearly explained the distinction between gender and sex differences, and four covered gender or sex roles under a specific heading. All 17 included material on Sigmund Freud, while more recent theorists such as Karen Horney, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Carol Gilligan were cited less frequently. Androgyny appeared in seven texts, and only two contained mention of gender schema theory. A table provides the breakdown of the number and recency of research citations. The study indicates that textbooks require a more balanced view of gender, both in topics included and in the number and recency of research findings related to this area. A 20-item reference list is included. (DJC)

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Gender Issues in Psychology: A Content Analysis of Introductory Psychology Textbooks

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Gender Issues in Psychology: A Content Analysis of Introductory Psychology Textbooks

Nearly 80% of college undergraduates take a course in introductory psychology, and this course is often the only exposure that a student has to the field of psychology. The textbook is a primary source of information for the students, and value judgments determine what material is included in or excluded from the text. One of the most common methods of identifying such value judgments is the analysis of the content and citations in textbooks. Several previous studies using such methods have noted bias in psychology textbooks, reflected by a lack of attention to issues relating to women and gender (eg., Denmark, 1983; Holbrook, 1982).

The purpose of the present study is to assess attention to gender issues using an analysis of content and research citations. Specific issues to be examined include: (a) explanation of the distinction between "gender differences" and "sex differences", with the former referring to differences resulting from socialization factors, and the latter relating to biologically-based differences (Unger, 1979); (b) inclusion of a chapter heading or sub-heading on gender/sex roles; (c) treatment of "masculine" and "feminine" perspectives on a historical concept, Freud and "penis envy", and Horney and "womb envy"; (d) treatment of "masculine" and "feminine" perspectives on a contemporary concept, Kohlberg and Gilligan and their views on moral development; (e) inclusion of recent research topics relating to gender: androgyny and gender schema theory; and (f) number of research citations relating to gender differences and

sex differences, and recency of these citations.

The sample consisted of all of the recent introductory psychology textbooks sent to five psychology faculty members by publishers for course adoption consideration. A total of 17 books published between 1985 and 1987 were included in the study. Three independent raters were trained on criteria to evaluate the texts according to inclusion of content related to gender issues, and number and currency of research citations. Interrater reliability was 96.9% for topic coverage, and 89.9% for number and recency of research citations.

Of the 17 textbooks in the sample, only 4 (23.5%) clearly explained the distinction between "sex differences" and "gender differences". Only 1 of the texts (5.8%) included a chapter heading on gender, sex roles, or sex differences, although 3 (17.6%) had chapter sub-headings related to these topics. All 17 of the texts included material on Freud, and 15 (88.2%) discussed Freud's concept of penis envy. Although 14 (82.3%) of the texts mentioned Horney, only 1 (5.8%) referred to her concept of womb envy. Sixteen of the texts (94.1%) mentioned Kohlberg and outlined his stages of moral development. Although Gilligan was referenced in 12 (70.6%) of the texts, her concept of moral development was described in only 7 (50%) of the books. The term "androgyny" appeared in only 7 (50%) of the texts, and only 2 (11.8 %) of the books included any mention of gender schema theory. The results of the ratings of frequency and recency of research citations related to gender/gender roles/sex roles and sex differences are summarized in Table 1. The textbooks varied widely, ranging from almost no attention to gender issues, to an

integration of current gender research throughout the textbook. The median number of research citations related to gender was 16 (range: 4 to 136), and the median number of gender citations which were published within four years prior to the publication of the text was 2 (range: 0 to 35). The median number of citations on sex differences was 7 (range: 0 to 51), and the median number of those published within four years before the publication of the text was 0 (range: 0 to 14).

The results of this study suggest that there is a wide range of variability among introductory psychology textbooks in their inclusion of material related to gender and sex differences. Overall, the findings indicate that much remains to be done in providing a more balanced view of gender, both in the topics included, and in the number and recency of research findings related to this area.

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Table 1

Number and Recency of Research Citations Related to Gender or Sex Differences

	Gender/Gender Roles/Sex Roles		Sex Differences	
Author/Year	Total	4 Yrs. Pre-pub.	Total	4 Yrs. Pre-pub.
Benjamin et al., 1987	4	0	7	0
Carlson, 1987	c	c	6	0
Crider et al., 1987	11	0	0	0
Darley et al., 1986	12	0	19	2
Feldman, 1987	6	2	0	0
Gleitman, 1986	41	6	42	6
Hothersall, 1985	17	0	9	0
Huffman et al., 1987	32 b	10	3 b	0
Myers, 1986	56	16	a	a
Roediger, 1987	4	1	21	4
Saccuzo, 1987	16	4	0	0
Scarr & Vander Zanden, 1987	6,c	3,c	51	14
Vogel, 1986	5	2	0	0
Wade & Tavris, 1987	136	35	a	a
Worchel & Shebilske, 1986	11	1	30	5
Wortman & Loftus, 1985	70	8	0	0
Zimbardo, 1985	23	7	10	2

a Under sex differences in index, says "see gender" (sex differences not listed separately)

b indexed as "psychological differences" rather than gender differences, and "biological differences" rather than sex differences

c Under gender in index, says "see sex differences" (gender differences not listed separately)